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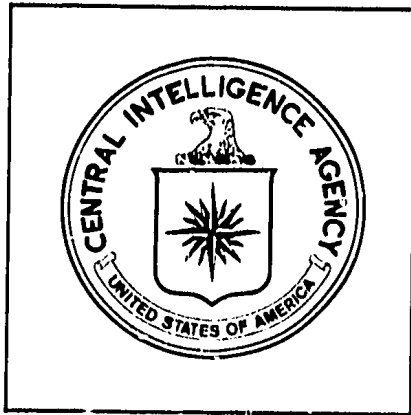
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STAFF NOTES:

Middle East Africa South Asia

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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Dahomey

Kerekou Still In Trouble

President Kerekou remains in deep political trouble a month after his radical-dominated military government fended off an attempted takeover by a moderate cabinet minister who charged the president with corruption. The US embassy in Cotonou reports the minister has been detained, but his charges against Kerekou have so discredited the president in the eyes of the officer corps that his ouster and possible exile appear near.

Kerekou seems to have played only a secondary role in thwarting the attempted takeover, and his efforts since then to clear himself have come off poorly. Kerekou's wife and children reportedly have taken refuge in Guinea, a strong supporter of Kerekou and his clique of radical officers. The only important radical officer still supporting Kerekou is the information minister, Lt. Azonhiho. He is said to be organizing a small force of irregulars, but probably lacks the political strength to play a commanding role in the current situation.

Meanwhile, Dahomey's other leading military officers are maneuvering intensively among the army's various factions to try to win agreement for a successor regime. Apparently, some sort of triumvirate arrangement that might include civilian representation is being discussed. It is unclear whether military moderates or radicals currently have the upper hand in the maneuvering.

Guinea and Nigeria are working behind the scenes to influence the outcome of Dahomey's latest political crisis. Guinea's foreign minister visited Cotonou last week. He reportedly assured Kerekou of Guinean President Toure's continued support and

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urged Kerekou to "stick it out." There are reports that Guinea has sent at least one planeload of arms and possibly military advisers to assist Lt. Azonhiho's irregulars.

Nigeria's role is considerably less visible, but Lagos, which is pushing economic cooperation with Dahomey, has an interest in keeping its neighbor on a moderate course. The Nigerian ambassador in Cotonou reportedly has been in frequent contact with a moderate Dahomean officer who is likely to play a leading role in a successor regime. Late last month, Nigeria's commissioner for external affairs and the army chief of staff visited Cotonou for secret consultations. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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